

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 SAM-01 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 CU-02 EA-07 AF-06

OMB-01 TRSE-00 OPIC-03 /102 W
----- 080629

R 310817Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4784

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 6413

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PO

SUBJ: LABOR DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) LISBON 6030 DTG 101802Z OCT 75; (B) LISBON 6067 DTG
141717Z OCT 75

SUMMARY: LABOR SCENE CONTINUES TO PRESENT MIXED PICTURE.
INTERSINDICAL HAS RECOVERED SOME MOMENTUM AFTER A SERIES OF SET-
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BACKS. NEW TEAM AT MINISTRY OF LABOR IS WORKING TO REDUCE PCP

INFLUENCE AND STRENGTHEN NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS. MINORITY GROUPS OF ACTIVISTS STILL DEMONSTRATING THEIR ABILITY TO DOMINATE PASSIVE MAJORITIES IN LABOR AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY.

1. INTERSINDICAL AGAIN ON THE MOVE: ALTHOUGH POLITICALLY IDENTIFIED WITH THE PCP AND BADLY MAULED IN A SERIES OF UNION ELECTIONS, PORTUGAL'S LABOR CONFEDERATION, INTERSINDICAL, HAS RECOVERED SOME MOMENTUM ON THE HEELS OF ITS ELECTORAL VICTORY IN THE METALLURGICAL FEDERATION. IT IS NOW ADAMANTLY INSISTING UPON ITS SOLE RIGHT TO DESIGNATE WORKERS REPRESENTATIVES TO THE AUTONOMOUS MIXED COMMISSIONS CONTROLLING THE NATION'S 480 DISTINCT OCCUPATIONAL WELFARE AND PENSION FUNDS, AND IS PUSHING FOR WORKER CONTROL OF THE FUNDS. A PRO-INTERINDICAL SLATE WON 82 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE SOUTHERN TEXTILE WORKERS UNION. PRO-INTERINDICAL NON-UNIONIZED LONGSHOREMEN ARE OCCUPYING LONGSHOREMEN'S HIRING HALLS IN AN EFFORT TO FORCE THEIR INCORPORATION INTO THE UNION.

2. POLITICAL DIVISIONS CAUSE UNION STALEMATES: SOME 15,000 PUBLIC EMPLOYEES MET IN LISBON OCT 15 IN AN UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO CREATE A NATIONAL UNION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. ELEMENTS ALIGNED WITH THE PCP TOOK THE LEAD IN ORGANIZING THE MEETING BUT PROPOSED STATUTES WERE PRESENTED BY EACH OF FOUR SLATES--THE PCP, THE SOCIALISTS, THE MAOIST MRPP AND THE EXTREME LEFT UDP. THE CHAOTIC 14-HOUR MEETING DISSOLVED IN DISORDER WITHOUT A VOTE BEING TAKEN. EFFORTS ARE CONTINUING TO FORM A PUBLIC EMPLOYEES UNION, THIS TIME WITH REGIONAL MEETINGS PRECEDING A GENERAL MEETING.

3. PRE-COMMUNIST ACTIVISTS IN THE SOUTHERN CLERICAL EMPLOYEES UNION, WHICH INCLUDES LISBON, HAVE SUCCEEDED IN FORCING THE RESIGNATION OF THE UNION'S RECENTLY ELECTED SOCIALIST LEADERSHIP COALITION. THE RESIGNATIONS OCCURRED FOLLOWING TWO HECTIC GENERAL ASSEMBLIES WHICH WERE DOMINATED BY A COMMUNIST MINORITY. THE PCP ELEMENTS WERE AIDED IN THEIR DISRUPTIVE EFFORTS BY A SPLIT WITHIN THE COALITION AND DIVIDED SOCIALIST SUPPORT.

4. LABOR MINISTRY A POLITICAL HOT SEAT: EFFORTS BY THE NEW REGIME OF LABOR MINISTER TOMAS ROSA TO REMOVE PCP INFLUENCE FROM THE MINISTRY OF LABOR ARE MAKING HEADWAY. MINISTRY CONFIDENTIAL

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EMPLOYEES ARE TAKING A LESS IDEOLOGICAL AND MORE PRAGMATIC APPROACH IN NEGOTIATING SETTLEMENTS TO LABOR DISPUTES. PRO-COMMUNIST MEDIA HAVE ATTACKED ROSA'S RULINGS LIMITING EMPLOYEES' MEETINGS AT THE MINISTRY AND REQUIRE THAT NON-PERMANENT PERSONNEL HIRED SINCE THE REVOLUTION APPLY FOR REGULAR STATUS. THE LATTER MOVE IN PARTICULAR IS SEEN AS AN ATTEMPT TO REMOVE MANY PCP SUPPORTERS BROUGHT INTO THE MINISTRY DURING THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS. ROSA IS ALSO IN PROCESS OF CREATING

WITHIN THE MINISTRY AN OFFICE OF SYNDICAL SUPPORT. IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT THE UNSTATED PURPOSE OF THIS OFFICE WILL BE TO SUPPORT NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS THROUGH TRAINING SEMINARS, PUBLICATIONS, AND LIAISON. FORMER MINISTER OF LABOR COSTA MARTINS HAS PUBLISHED SEVERAL NEWSPAPER ATTACKS ON HIS SUCCESSOR, THUS JOINING A CHORUS OF CRITICISM FROM THE PCP, INTERSINDICAL, COMMUNIST-DOMINATED UNIONS, AND FRONT GROUPS. ROSA HAS RESPONDED TO MANY OF THESE ATTACKS WITH ALLEGATIONS THAT THEY ARE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED.

5. LABOR MINISTER VS METALLURGICAL WORKERS: TOMAS ROSA ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 26 THAT HE COULD NOT SUPPORT THE DECREETING OF WAGE LEVELS BEYOND INDUSTRY'S CAPACITY TO PAY AS THE INEVITABLE RESULT WOULD BE EITHER NON-COMPLIANCE OR ECONOMIC BANKRUPTCY. THE MINISTER'S STATEMENT WAS IN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO THE LAST-MINUTE DECREE OF THE FIFTH GOVERNMENT GRANTING A WAGE INCREASE OF AT LEAST 23 PERCENT TO PORTUGAL'S 220,000 METALLURGICAL WORKERS. ROSA HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE CONTROVERSIAL DECREE IS LEGALLY VALID AND BINDING. HOWEVER, WITH MOST PRICES FIXED AND PRODUCTIVITY DOWN, THERE IS A WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT THE SIXTH GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE MEASURES TO EASE THE DECREE'S IMPACT. RESPONSIBLE INDUSTRY SOURCES CLAIM MANY FIRMS WILL BE UNABLE TO ABSORB THE LEGALLY REQUIRED WAGE RATES.

6. LABOR UNREST AT MILITARY REPAIR FACILITY: LABOR UNREST INVOLVING CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES AT THE MILITARY SUPPLY AND REPAIR DEPOT (OGMA) AT ALVERCA IS STILL CONTINUING. FOLLOWING A BRIEF WORK STOPPAGE OCTOBER 10-13 (REF A), THE WORKERS RESUMED THEIR REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WORK ON PORTUGUESE, WEST GERMAN, AND US MILITARY AIRCRAFT. THE NEWLY ELECTED WORKERS COMMISSION AT OGMA IS REPORTEDLY DOMINATED BY A MAOIST MRPP GROUP REPRESENTING ABOUT 250 OF ALVERCA'S 4,000 EMPLOYEES. THE COMMISSION HAS CALLED FOR THE RESIGNATION OF THE ALVERCA

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BASE COMMANDER BUT IS APPARENTLY MAKING LITTLE HEADWAY. MORE MODERATE WORKERS HAVE SCHEDULED A MEETING FOR OCTOBER 30 IN AN ATTEMPT TO CURB THE MAOISTS AND RESOLVE THE ISSUE.

7. COMMENT: THE EXAMPLES OF OGMA, THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, THE LISBON CLERICAL WORKERS UNION, AND THE NEWSPAPER "O SEculo" (SEPTe) ARE TYPICAL EXAMPLES OF THE ABILITY OF MINORITY GROUPS OF ACTIVISTS TO DOMINATE PASSIVE MAJORITIES. THERE ARE TWO HOPEFUL ASPECTS: (1) PORTUGUESE WORKERS ARE INCREASINGLY AWARE THAT THEY HAVE IT WITHIN THEIR POWER TO ORGANIZE AND DEFEND THEIR INTERESTS; AND (2) THE MINISTRY OF LABOR IS SEEKING WAYS TO STRENGTHEN NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS SO THEY MAY RESIST THE DOMINATION OF INTERSINDICAL.

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